

CATALOGUES OF ART EXHIBITIONS ORGANIZED BY THE ARTS COUNCIL
OF GREAT BRITAIN REPUBLISHED ON MICROFICHE

Published on microfiche by:

Chadwyck-Healey Ltd
45 South Street
Bishops Stortford
Herts CM23 3AG
England

Somerset House
417 Maitland Avenue
Teaneck
New Jersey 07666
USA

Date of publication and production of master: 1975

Series: The purpose of this series is to make available those catalogues that have lasting interest through their text or their illustrations. Catalogues and cumulations of titles in the series are available from the publishers

Serial numbers: Each title is given a seven-figure serial number in the top right hand corner of the microfiche title strip. This is an accession number. The first figure indicates the number of the list in which the title first appears; the first three-figure group signifies the gallery or museum; the second three-figure group the accession number for that title.

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Technical data:

Producing laboratory: Micromedia Ltd, Kidlington, Oxford.

A DESCRIPTIVE CATALOGUE OF

ART FILMS

PRESENTED BY

*The Arts Council
of Great Britain*

IN CO-OPERATION WITH

The British Film Institute

1951-52

FOREWORD

THE EXPERIMENTAL SEASON of programmes of art films, arranged a year ago by the Arts Council in co-operation with the British Film Institute, met with so warm a response that it has been decided to organize a second. During the past year a number of new films have been added to the list, notably the film on Henry Moore made by the BBC for television. This development in British film-making is particularly welcome as the number of Continental art films of a sufficiently high standard is limited.

The service provided by the British Film Institute and the Arts Council consists of a mobile unit, with operator, projection apparatus, and the repertory of films included in this catalogue, which can be sent to any hall or other suitable place by arrangement with the Council's Regional Directors. Some of the foreign films have been provided with English subtitles, but the high cost of this prohibits their all being so treated. This catalogue is intended to supply an outline of the themes of the films or information supplementary thereto.

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I

THE STORY OF THE TRUE CROSS

A film of paintings by Piero della Francesca (d. 1492) principally from the cycle of frescoes in the Church of S. Francesco at Arezzo, painted between 1452/3-1466.

Directed and produced by Luciano Emmer and Enrico Gras. Black and white. English commentary. Running time: 10 minutes.

PIERO DELLA FRANCESCA was born in 1410 or 1411 at Borgo San Sepolcro, a little town on the borders of Umbria and Tuscany. He received his earliest artistic impressions from the colourful works of the Sienese Trecento in his native town. By 1439 he is known to have been working as an assistant to Domenico Veneziano in S. Maria Nuova in Florence, and at this period must have seen the latest works of Brunelleschi, Masaccio and Fra Angelico. In 1442 he was again in San Sepolcro where in 1445 he was commissioned to paint a polyptych; thereafter he worked at Urbino, Rimini, Ferrara, Arezzo and elsewhere. He wrote books on geometry and perspective. He died in 1492, after going blind.

The Story of the True Cross, as depicted by Piero della Francesca in the choir of S. Francesco, following the *Golden Legend*, opens with the old age and death of Adam. The archangel Michael gave to Seth a branch of the Tree of Knowledge, saying that when it bore fruit Adam should be made whole. But Adam died, and Seth planted the branch in his mouth. As time passed, it grew into a magnificent tree which the vainglorious King Solomon cut down to use in his palace; but it was too large, and became a bridge over the river Siloam. The Queen of Sheba, approaching Solomon's palace with her retinue, was inspired to recognize the holy wood, and in his presence she knelt and told him of her intimation that on that tree should be nailed a Man who would destroy the realm of the Jews. Solomon thereupon ordered the tree to be buried deep in the ground, where it remained until it was found by the Jews and made into the Cross upon which Christ was crucified.

The film here interpolates the story of Christ, since this is not depicted in the Arezzo frescoes, from other works by Piero, and we are shown the Virgin Mary, the Annunciation, the Nativity, Baptism, Crucifixion and Resurrection of Christ, and the film then returns to the frescoes in S. Francesco, where the rediscovery of the True Cross is prefaced, as in the *Golden Legend*, by an account of the dream and victory of Constantine. His empire was menaced by the army of Maxentius; the night before a great battle, as Constantine slept in his tent, an angel awoke him and showed to him the sign of the Cross in heaven, with on it the words 'With this

sign shalt thou conquer'. On the morrow, bearing the sign of the Cross and secure in divine assurance, the army of Constantine routed that of Maxentius.

The whereabouts of the True Cross upon which Christ was crucified were known to a Jew named Judas, and to force him to reveal them he was placed in a dry well and threatened with starvation. After six days he was hauled out, and led the Empress Helena to a spot where, after digging twenty paces deep, three crosses were revealed. To discover which was the True Cross, Judas laid them one after the other on the bier of a young man recently dead; when the third was laid on, the body that was dead came to life again.

Thirty years after the rediscovery of the Cross, Chosroes, King of the Persians, seized it from Jerusalem. Heraclius, Emperor of the East, made war on him for its recovery, and defeated him after a savage and bloody battle, during which Chosroes' son was stabbed to death, and Chosroes himself beheaded. Heraclius and his train bore the Cross back to Jerusalem, whose inhabitants received it kneeling in adoration.

2

THE MIRACULOUS BROTHERS

(*I Fratelli Miracolosi*)

A film of paintings by Fra Angelico (1387(?)–1455).
Directed and produced by Luciano Emmer and Enrico Gras. Black and white. English titles. Running time: 10 minutes.

GUIDO DI PIETRO, now known as Fra Angelico, entered the Dominican friary of S. Domenico near Fiesole in 1407, and eventually became its prior. Nothing is known of his training in painting, and he is first referred to as a painter in 1432. His work was inspired by popular holy legends, and he was active principally in Florence, and also in Orvieto and Rome.

This film is based on the predella panels of the altarpiece representing the Madonna with Saints painted by Fra Angelico in 1440 for the high altar of the monastery church of S. Marco in Florence. The eight predella panels depicting scenes from the lives of SS. Cosmas and Damian—the patron saints of the Medici family—were painted in honour of Cosimo de' Medici who was responsible for the reconstruction of the monastery between 1437 and 1441, but except for two, they are now divided between Munich, Paris, Dublin and New York. Other paintings by the master are also brought into the film—notably those on the walls of the monks' cells in the same monastery.

The legend runs that the brothers Cosmas and Damian, Arabians by birth, lived in a city in Macedonia. They were brought up by their mother as Christians, and were remarkable for their charity. Not only did they distribute all their worldly goods to the poor, but studied medicine that they might be able to alleviate the sufferings of the sick, which they did without recompense, exercising their great skill and performing miracles of healing only for the love of God. During the reign of the wicked emperors Diocletian and Maxentius, when so many saints perished, Cosmas and Damian were seized by Lycias, the proconsul of Arabia, and cast into prison. At first they were thrown into the sea, but were saved by an angel; and then into the fire, which refused to consume them; then bound on crosses and stoned and shot at, but the stones and arrows turned back and struck those who cast them. So the proconsul, believing they were sorcerers, had them beheaded. They were about to be buried separately when a camel appeared and, speaking with a human voice, declared that they who had been united in martyrdom should not be separated in the grave. In Fra Angelico's pictures, Cosmas and Damian are accompanied throughout their tribulations by their three younger brothers.

3

THE LEGEND OF ST URSULA

(*La Leggenda di Sant' Orsola*)

A film from the series of nine canvases painted between 1490 and 1495 by Vittore Carpaccio for the chapel of the Scuola di Sant' Orsola, and now in the Accademia at Venice. *Directed and produced by Luciano Emmer and Enrico Gras.* Black and white. Italian commentary. English titles. Running time: 10 minutes.

VITTORE CARPACCIO was born before 1457 and died between 1523-26. He worked in Venice, where he may have been trained by Lazzaro Bastiano, but the influence of Gentile Bellini was paramount in his style, which changed very little in the course of his life. He was a very prolific painter.

The legend runs that Ursula, the only daughter of Maurus, King of Brittany, was remarkable alike for her beauty, her learning, and her Christian piety. The pagan king Agrippina of England sent ambassadors to Maurus, requesting Ursula's hand in marriage for his son Conon. Maurus, knowing his daughter had made a vow of perpetual chastity, was embarrassed by this request, though reluctant to offend the powerful king of England. Ursula, however,

agreed to the marriage on three conditions: firstly, that the bridegroom should give her for her companions ten virgins of noble blood, and that each of these and herself should be given a thousand maidens to wait on them; secondly, that Conon should respect her virginity for the space of three years, during which time she and her virgins might visit the shrines of the holy saints; and thirdly, that Prince Conon and his court should receive Christian baptism. King Maurus transmitted these conditions to the ambassadors, who returned to England. Conon, inflamed by desire for the princess, agreed to the conditions, assembled the virgins from all parts of England and went to Brittany to claim his bride. From thence the whole company set out for Rome in a fleet of ships navigated by the virgins, and sailing north to the Rhine reached Cologne, where it was revealed to Ursula in a dream that on her return she and her companions should in that place suffer martyrdom for the cause of God. They continued their journey to Basel, and over the mountains to Rome, where they were met outside the gates by Pope Cyriacus, who blessed them, and insisted on accompanying them on their return. As had been foretold, when they reached Cologne, they were set upon by a barbarian army, incited by the two pagan Roman captains in command of the Imperial troops in Germania, and massacred. Ursula, whose majestic beauty had awed the barbarians, was carried to their prince, but on her spurning his offer of marriage, he shot her dead with three arrows from his bow. Her spirit ascended into Heaven with those whom she had led to their death: the glorious sisterhood of martyrs, her betrothed husband and Pope Cyriacus, where, with palms and crowns, they stand around the throne of God.

The number of eleven thousand virgins is said to be founded on a mistake of XI.M.V. (i.e. eleven martyr virgins) for *Undecimilla virginis*, eleven thousand virgins.

4

THE STORY OF SPRING

(*L'Allegoria della Primavera*)

A film of paintings by Sandro Botticelli (c. 1445-1510).

Directed and produced by Luciano Emmer and Enrico Gras. Black and white. English titles. Running time: 10 minutes.

ALESSANDRO DI MARIANO FILIPEPI, called Sandro Botticelli, was a Florentine who, as a boy, was apprenticed to a goldsmith and then, at fifteen years of age, entered the studio of Fra Filippo Lippi.

He later studied under Antonio Pollaiuolo. From the former he derived a graceful rhythm of line and a certain melancholy of expression, and from the latter a quality of vigour and purity of drawing. By 1472 he was acknowledged by his contemporaries as one of Florence's foremost artists. He was patronized by the Medici family, and from 1481-3 was in Rome engaged, at the behest of Pope Sixtus IV, on the decorations of the Sistine Chapel. Towards the end of his life he came under the influence of the teachings of Savonarola and thereafter painted very little. He treated both pagan and religious subjects.

This film, for which the initial idea is derived from Botticelli's great canvas of about 1483 in the Uffizzi, *Primavera*, evokes the atmosphere of spring through the artist's poetic vision. In the *Primavera*, Botticelli's aim has been to express in paint that intense delight in sylvan life which contemporary poets had expressed in song, and as both the taste of the age and his own decorative intentions called for personification, he has embodied his subject in figurative images derived indiscriminately from various poetical sources. Venus is the central and presiding divinity, her identity indicated by a little cupid above her head; to the right is the Spirit of Spring, conceived as a beautiful girl in a light flower-embroidered robe, garlanded with flowers; next to her, in an image derived from Ovid, is Flora, the Goddess of Flowers, chased by the breeze Zephyrus, and generating blossoms from her mouth as he touches her. To the left, Venus's attendants are the Three Graces, the nymphs Aglaia, Euphrosyne and Thalia, as described by Alberti: 'arrayed in light vestments, laughing together with hands interlaced, resplendent in their beauty'; and Mercury, the herald and messenger of the gods. Here we see the spirit of the Renaissance with all its joyous appreciation of natural forms, of graceful and harmonious movement, and its synthesis of profound idealism and pagan lyricism.

Sequences based on other paintings by Botticelli, notably *The Birth of Venus* and the late *Nativity* in the National Gallery, are included in the film.

5

THE DRAMA OF CHRIST

A film from the frescoes by Giotto in the Arena Chapel at Padua. *Directed and produced by Luciano Emmer and Enrico Gras.* Black and white. English titles. Running time: 10 minutes.

GIOTTO was born, probably in 1266, in the Mugello, near Florence,

and died in that city in 1337. Little is known of his origins and training, but by quite an early age he had attained considerable renown which rapidly grew to an uncontested greatness. His first important work was the cycle of frescoes of the life of St Francis in the Upper Church at Assisi, dating from the last years of the thirteenth century. He subsequently went to Rome, and then in 1303 to Padua to decorate with paintings the chapel in the Arena just built by Enrico Scrovegni, a noble citizen of the town, which was consecrated in 1305. Giotto returned to Assisi and Florence, went in 1328 to Naples for five years, and in 1334 was appointed *capo maestro* of the Cathedral in Florence, a position which to some extent gave him the general direction of the artistic works of the town. It was in this capacity that he directed the building of the campanile to the cathedral.

In his series of thirty-eight frescoes, arranged in a triple course along the walls of the nave of the Arena Chapel, Giotto depicted the story of the Virgin and her Divine Son. This film concentrates on a few scenes from the life of Christ: His Nativity; the flight of the Holy Family into Egypt to escape Herod's massacre of the innocents; the Raising of Lazarus; Christ's betrayal by Judas; the Crucifixion; and the Lamentation over the Body of Christ. The film technique is skilfully and sensitively used to bring out Giotto's capacity to seize the central significance of a subject and to portray it in the simplest and most moving way; and by its enormous enlargement of detail it enables us to see more clearly than is possible in the chapel itself, how his deep understanding of humanity is translated into the most expressive pictorial terms.

6

PARADISE LOST

A film of paintings by Hieronymus Bosch (1450-1516).
Produced and directed by Luciano Emmer and Enrico Gras. Black and white. English commentary. Running time: 10 minutes.

HIERONYMUS (JEROME) BOSCH was born probably at 's-Hertogenbosch (Bois-le-Duc) in Brabant about 1450 or 1460. He died there in 1516. Little is known of his life; his art is quite outside the main tradition of Netherlandish painting deriving from Jan van Eyck and the Master of Flémalle, and stems rather from the popular style of medieval gothic art, with its preoccupation with man's struggle with the Devil in his various manifestations. Philip II of Spain and Don Felipe de Guevara (d. 1564) both seem to have been

inordinately fond of Bosch's work, and many paintings by him are still in Spain and Portugal.

The film is based on Bosch's two great triptychs, *The Garden of Delights*, c. 1485, and *The Hay Waggon*, c. 1510, in the Escorial near Madrid. At the beginning it shows the Earthly Paradise made by God, His creation of Adam and Eve, their temptation, fall and expulsion from the Garden of Eden. This is followed by the unleashing of the forces of evil becoming ever more macabre and terrifying. Bosch's nightmare world, swarming with vivid and monstrous symbols of temptation and sin set in strange landscapes, has remarkable power—surrealist artists such as Dali and Max Ernst have been particularly influenced by him—and the illusion of movement produced by the film technique, reinforced by the remarkable music, heightens the vividness of the drama of his vision of Paradise and Paradise Lost.

7

THE DEMONIAK IN ART

(*Il Demoniaco nell' Arte*).

Produced by Vittorio Boscaro. Directed by Carlo Castelli Gattinara. Black and white. Italian commentary. Running time: 15 minutes.

A COMPOSITE representation of the 'diableries' of Bosch, Brueghel and a number of other artists and painters of Flemish, Dutch, Alsatian and Rhenish origin, who lived during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The film is of a type made famous by Luciano Emmer, using works of art as material for a cinematic *tour de force*, rather than using the film to throw explanatory light on works of art; and it may be asked whether the common theme which it draws out of the macabre, the monstrous, the grotesque and sinister images upon which it successively dwells—the theme of man's soul invoking the Divine Grace in order to be freed from the devils and hobgoblins that beset it—is not perhaps in some way a Dantesque super-imposition. The answer to such a question is not an easy one to give, and the film and its subject matter must from this point be left to speak for itself.

The artists whose works are shown are:

Hieronymus Bosch	Herri met de Bles
Pieter Brueghel	Martin de Vos
Lucas van Leyden	Matthias Grünewald
Pieter Huys	Nicolaus Manuel Deutsch
Joachim Patinir	Martin Schongauer

8

IMAGES MEDIEVALES

(Pictures of the Middle Ages)

Produced by Pierre Levý. Colour film. French commentary. Running time: 18 minutes.

USING ILLUMINATED pages of fourteenth and fifteenth century French manuscripts from the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, this film recreates in vivid detail the life of the Middle Ages. It shows us a panorama of social history: religious observances, feasts, fashions, hunting parties, domestic life and the everyday tasks of field and workshop. An effect of great intimacy is produced by the literal and appreciative observations of the mediaeval illuminators. The historically evocative quality of the film is enhanced by the use of contemporary music.

9

LASCAUX, CRADLE OF MAN'S ART

Written, produced and directed by William Chapman. Full colour. American commentary. Running time: 22 minutes.

THE LASCAUX cave in the Dordogne was found by chance in 1940 by four boys. Preserved on its rocky interior walls are the most remarkable series of prehistoric paintings yet discovered, dating from the Palaeolithic Age, some two hundred centuries ago. Almost entirely devoted to the representation of animals, these paintings are of interest not only to the anthropologist as constituting a record of a vanished people which has left no other trace of its beliefs and emotions; but also to art lovers in that they show a very high degree of observation and skill. The extraordinary naturalism of these prehistoric artists and their total disregard for scale or general design raise problems which may perplex but will certainly stimulate the spectator.

10

THE LOON'S NECKLACE

Produced by Crawley Films Ltd (USA). Directed by Budge Crawley. Full colour. English commentary. Running time: 11 minutes.

THE STORY, as told in a North American Indian legend, of how the loon, a water-fowl, acquired its white neckband. The characters in the story are established by the ceremonial wooden masks carved and coloured by Indians of British Columbia. These masks, which represent human characters and natural forces, have great artistic interest, while the story possesses considerable dramatic force.

II

AN EXPERIMENT IN CUBISM

(*L'Esperienza del Cubismo*)

Produced by Geo. Taparelli. Directed by Glauco Pellegrini. Black and white. English commentary. Running time: 11 minutes.

THIS FILM, essentially expository in intention, is an attempt to interpret some of the underlying principles and methods of Cubism to the uninitiated spectator. Since the invention of photography, much modern art has moved away from direct representation of the visible world (which is a function of photography) and has attempted a deeper penetration of reality. The film illustrates and explains this contrast in aim, and by a comparison between examples of latter-day experimental art and objects as we ordinarily see them, shows how the artist continues to draw on nature for the material of his picture, but recomposes it for his own specific ends. To the man-in-the-street such pictures often appear to have neither rhyme nor reason and this film takes a step towards making them intelligible; but one must add that the problems at issue are here considerably over-simplified.

I2

PAINTER AND POET

Produced by John Halas, in association with Joan Maude and Michael Warre, for the British Film Institute. Black and white.

- I. *Twa Corbies*, spoken by John Laurie, illustrated by Michael Rothenstein; Shakespeare: *Spring and Winter*, sung by Peter Pears, illustrated by Mervyn Peake. Running time: 9 minutes.
- II. Gascoyne: *Winter Garden*, spoken by Michael Redgrave, illustrated by Barbara Jones; Dibdin: *The Sailor's Consolation*, spoken by Stanley Holloway, illustrated by John Minton; Owen Meredith: *Check to Song*, spoken by Eric Portman, illustrated by Michael Warre. Running time: 6 minutes.
- III. Thomas Nashe: *In Time of Pestilence*, spoken by Robert Harris, paintings by Michael Ayrton; Kathleen Raine: *The Pythoness*, spoken by Mary Morris, drawings by Henry Moore. Running time: 6 minutes.

These films are from an experimental series of four made especially for the Festival of Britain (Cowper's *John Gilpin*, the fourth, is being shown commercially). They are an attempt to interpret verse by

means of illustrative drawings or paintings by contemporary artists. The camera explores the static picture, reflecting, illustrating or reinforcing the spoken word, while the poem is narrated on the sound track.

I3

A LECTURE IN ANATOMY

Produced by Geo. Taparelli for Lux Films. Conceived by Rudolfo Sonego. Technical Director, Glauco Pellegrini. Black and white. Italian commentary. Running time: 10 minutes.

A DOCUMENTARY film showing how bone structure and joints allow the human body maximum movement with the minimum of effort. Working models of the diaphragm and limbs, as well as live demonstrations, simplify the very interesting lesson, enabling us better to appreciate the skill and knowledge of the great masters of figure painting.

I4

LA POULETTE GRISE

Produced by the National Film Board of Canada. Directed by Norman MacLaren. Full colour. French Canadian song. Running time: 6 minutes.

TO THE accompaniment of a French Canadian song this film creates a series of images which, dissolving continuously one into the other, follow the simple story of the song. Unlike animated cartoon films the charm of this film lies not in movement but in the subtle mutation of colour and form in unbroken and harmonious sequence.

I5

FIDDLE-DI-DEE

Produced by National Film Board of Canada. Directed by Norman MacLaren. Full colour. Music, no commentary. Running time: 4 minutes.

THIS FILM is one of a series made by Norman MacLaren and represents his very original approach to the problem of translating sound into visual images. To the accompaniment of a solo violin playing a lively barn dance a succession of brilliantly coloured shapes and patterns dance across the screen, the movement matching that of the music, the colours picking out the tone-colours of the instrument. This film is as novel technically as it is full of enjoyment for the patterns are painted direct on to the celluloid and not formed photographically.

16

LE DOUANIER ROUSSEAU

Produced by F. Tavano. Black and white. French commentary. Running time: 15 minutes.

HENRI ROUSSEAU was born at Laval in 1844. The son of an iron-monger, he was for a long time employed by the internal customs office of Paris, and is for this reason known as 'Le Douanier'. As a young man he served in the French army in Mexico, and recollections of the tropical flora and fauna which he then saw appear frequently in his later work. In 1884 he left the Customs service and devoted himself to painting, exhibiting at the Salon des Indépendants and later at the Salon d'Automne. He was entirely self-taught, and his fresh and inexperienced approach recalls that of primitive artists and has many of their virtues. He died in 1910, after enjoying considerable success among the younger painters and critics who found in this modern primitive many of the qualities which they themselves sought and admired.

17

BRAQUE

Directed by André Bureau and Frederique Duran. Produced by Claudon Films. Black and white. French commentary. Running time: 25 minutes.

GEORGES BRAQUE, born 1881, was one of the originators of that method of painting which consists in a kind of breaking up and recomposing of the surfaces of objects, and which is called *Cubism*. In this film, after a brief introduction sketching his development, we see Braque at work in his studio and can get an insight into the methods and technique of this great modern painter. We are shown, as though it were with the painter's eyes, the way in which familiar objects are reformed into new shapes on the canvas. One sequence follows Braque along the shore, seeking sea-worn stones which he works on with a knife and arranges in simple but satisfying groups.

18

HENRY MOORE

Produced, directed and written by John Read. Black and white. English commentary. Running time: 26 minutes.

THIS FILM on the sculptor Henry Moore was originally made for transmission over the BBC Television Service as part of the Festival of Britain programme. It is a detailed investigation into the sources

of inspiration and the nature and development of his art. The film includes sequences on Moore's figures at Battersea, Northampton, Dartington and Stevenage, and ends with one which follows, from conception to completion, his work on the great bronze figure commissioned for the 1951 Festival by the Arts Council of Great Britain, which was shown at the South Bank exhibition and is now on loan for five years at Temple Newsam House, Leeds. Moore himself appears and speaks in this film which was made in the closest co-operation with the artist.

I9

ERNST BARLACH

Produced by Alfred Ehrhardt, Germany, 1950. Black and white. German subtitles. Running time: 27 minutes.

ERNEST BARLACH was born at Wedel in Holstein in 1870 and died in 1938 at Güstrow in Mecklenburg. He studied in Dresden and Paris and was deeply impressed by his travels in Russia in 1906. His last years were overshadowed by the Nazi regime; after 1933 all his public and church monuments were removed, and his works confiscated as 'degenerate'. He was one of Germany's foremost sculptors and though to some extent his work has affinities with the classic tradition of European figure sculpture revived by his contemporaries Maillol and Despiau, he is more expressionistic than they, using simplifications of mask and drapery to express strong feeling. His own words (and he was a writer of considerable gifts) on German art are relevant to his work: '... not beauty or loveliness are our strength, rather the opposite: ugliness, demoniac passion and the grotesque genius of greatness, but most of all humour with its army of original figures'. This film does not attempt to follow the development of Barlach's style, but concentrates entirely on showing, in a series of beautifully photographed sequences accompanied by music of Tchaikowsky and Bruckner, the form and feeling of a number of his works in isolation. Among these are many of his smaller figures in wood or bronze—Singing Man, The Avenger, Russian Lovers—and the three figures from the unfinished Community of Saints designed for the niches on the façade of the Katherinenkirche in Lübeck; several of his drawings and woodcuts are also shown.

Produced by the Museum of Modern Art, New York.
 Full colour. American commentary. Running time:
 10 minutes.

A STUDY of the 'Mobiles' of this contemporary American artist (b. 1898) whose talent has found expression in the creation of intricate three-dimensional fantasies made of metal and wire. These, precisely coloured and exquisitely balanced, are designed to move gracefully through the air at the slightest impulse.

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